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ABSTRACT

Presented in the form of 29 questions and answers is information on North Carolina's public school program for gifted and talented children at elementary and secondary levels. Discussed are the criteria for student eligibility, typical characteristics of gifted children, both acceleration and enrichment programs, special class curriculum, and funding. Also presented are 15 forms of special class organization including self contained classes, itinerant teachers, continuous progress, and advanced placement. Final questions describe teacher preparation and the Governor's School, an 8 week summer program for 400 gifted high school juniors and seniors. (DB)

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INFORMATION CONCERNING THE PROGRAM FOR GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENTS

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INTRODUCTION

The Exceptionally Talented Program or Program for Gifted and Talented Children in North Carolina was started in 1961 with five classes. Since then the program has steadily grown. During this period our main effort has been devoted to:

1. seeking better ways to identify exceptionally talented students,
2. developing instructional programs,
3. enlarging the scope and sequence of programs throughout the State,
4. striving to serve more eligible children,
5. furnishing in-service training for teachers,
6. broadening the concepts of staff utilization,
7. producing and disseminating materials useful to teachers of bright students,
8. working with administrators and teachers in discovering talents other than academic;
9. demonstrating new and innovative techniques of teaching (Inquiry Process, the teacher in the role of a facilitator of learning, creative ideas, etc.)

This publication consists of answers to questions that our office frequently receives. In addition, the publication will be used to disseminate pertinent information concerning the program for gifted youngsters. Since we realize that every question asked cannot be included, we request that interested individuals contact this office at any time when they have questions or suggestions concerning this program in North Carolina

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1 QUESTION: What do the terms "exceptionally talented" and "gifted and talented" mean?

ANSWER: Terms such as "exceptionally talented," "gifted and talented," and "academically talented" have been used interchangeably through the years. Article 38-115-306, Public School Laws of North Carolina as amended July 1, 1969, uses "exceptionally talented." Various states, cities and the U. S. Office of Education have chosen criteria best suited to their own needs. In North Carolina the following criteria are used for student eligibility:

a. A group intelligence quotient of 120 or higher

b. A majority of marks of A or B

c. A group academic achievement test of grade level or better

d. Teacher or principal recommendation

e. And/or possess other characteristics of giftedness and talents to the extent that he can profit from programs for the gifted and talented.

2 QUESTION: Other than high test scores, what characteristics are exceptionally talented children likely to have that would indicate these abilities to parents, teachers and administrators?

ANSWER: While research has shown that it is impossible to recognize all gifted and talented children without the use of tests, it has also served to alleviate some gross misconceptions. For instance, in the past these children were often thought to be "eggheads" and frail weaklings. Dr. Lewis Terman's massive study is one of the best known research projects. Research gives the following picture of these students:

a. the child probably learned to walk and talk before the average child;

b. he is generally above average for his age in height, weight, and physical endurance, but some studies reported no superiority for the gifted in physical stature;

c. he is generally above average in strength of grip, leg strength, and speed in running;

d. he will generally be more independent than the average child and more capable of estimating his own sociometric status in a group;

e. he will usually get along better with his parents and friends than the average child unless he has an IQ over 180;

f. he will show a better than average ability to evaluate facts and arguments;

g. he will be able to solve more complex problems, puzzles, and games than the average child;

h. he will learn to read easily and will read more and better books than the average child;

i. he is likely to make more collections and have more hobbies and acquire more knowledge of games and plays than the average child;

j. he will be less inclined to boast or overstate his knowledge;

k. he will be more trustworthy when under temptation to cheat; and

l. he will score higher on tests of emotional stability.

3. QUESTION: In what areas are these children superior?

ANSWER: Students so identified are distinguished by their ability to do higher levels of thinking--they have the ability to do abstract thinking and to conceptualize. They are able to cover more subject matter in school and to delve deeper into their material than the average students. They may also rank above average in art judgment, capacity for musical knowledge, and mechanical ability.

4. QUESTION: Will a child's grades be lower if he is placed in a class for the gifted and talented?

ANSWER: The grading system is determined by the local school unit and is currently in a fluid stage. Several ways of determining grades are used across the state. Within many school administrative units, the A, B, C type of grading is being replaced by other types of evaluation: (1) Superior does good work consistently; needs improvement; (2) written evaluation, Honors--Pass--Fail. In some cases grades remain about the same. In others, grades are generally somewhat lower. However, children are not penalized if their grades do drop because their records will show which grades were earned in an advanced ability class. A grade of "B" in an exceptionally talented class is more respected by college placement boards than an "A" in a regular class. College board test scores will often carry more weight for admission to college than high school grades and students who have been in exceptionally talented classes generally score higher on college board tests.

5. QUESTION: When are exceptionally talented children identified?

ANSWER: Local school units decide the grade level at which these classes are started. Many schools identify students and start classes at the fifth grade level. It is possible, however, to effectively identify exceptionally talented children on the primary level, and this is done by some schools. Other schools wait until the student is in high school to begin exceptionally talented classes. The Section for the Gifted and Talented urge school administrators to evaluate all children as early as possible to insure proper educational placement.

6. QUESTION: Do parents have any assurance that their child will remain talented as he continues to develop and mature?

ANSWER: It was once thought that exceptionally talented children "burned out" early and often fell below the average students in ability early in life. It has now been proved that this is not the case. Many studies have shown that those who are identified as superior in ability as children will in almost all cases remain superior throughout their lifetime. Dr. Terman has been carefully following a group that was identified as gifted in 1921. They have continued to improve their relative status since that time. This and other studies have shown that the "early ripe, early rot" theory is not correct.

7. QUESTION: Why are separate classes for the exceptionally talented used?

ANSWER: North Carolina teachers have been trained to work mostly with the "average" or middle group. Those who are very high or very low in ability frequently do not receive an educational program tailored to their particular needs in a regular classroom. At times those teachers who have had training in working with students with low and high ability find themselves with little time for working with these children after giving adequate instruction to the average students. When time is available, it may go toward helping the slower students. It is generally felt that the brighter students can "get it on their own." Research studies have shown that this is not the case. THE SCHOOL DROPOUT RATE IS ALMOST AS HIGH FOR THE BRIGHT STUDENTS AS IT IS FOR THE SLOWER STUDENTS. All students who are properly identified as exceptionally talented have the ability to complete a college education. However, only about 20 percent complete their college work. The exceptionally talented program in North Carolina is an attempt to correct this waste of our most precious talent--the gifted child.

8. QUESTION: What are the effects of acceleration on these students?

ANSWER: Early attempts at acceleration, passing through grade work and a grade at a faster rate, worked well for instructional purposes but caused some social problems. After a few years of acceleration the student found himself in classes with students three or four years older than himself. Some students could meet requirements for high school graduation when they were no older than fourteen or fifteen. They were then often denied admission to college at that age, and those who were admitted were generally "out of place" with the older college students.

Acceleration programs have mostly been abandoned. A more realistic approach is ENRICHMENT and in-depth activity. Enrichment programs provide an opportunity for the student to go deeper into the material presented at his grade level instead of giving him the material that he would normally get at the next grade level. Exceptionally talented programs in North Carolina stress enrichment instead of acceleration. Some high schools allow their students to take one or two courses in a college while still in high school.

9. QUESTION: What goes on in a gifted and talented class that is different from regular classrooms?

ANSWER: In an attempt to answer this question, many prominent educators from all over the nation were asked to give their opinion of what should be different. Almost all agreed that the subject matter should be essentially the same. The difference should be in the way the material is presented. In the regular classroom much of the student's time is spent learning facts and opinions. Talented students can learn this information more rapidly than average students. In exceptionally talented classes the students learn this basic information rapidly and then move on to more complex operations, such as evaluating the facts and using them to form new ideas, without having to wait for the slower students to catch up. The emphasis in the class is placed on abstract thinking processes, originality, self expression and creativity. A different type of curriculum is required to give the students the curriculum that they need.

10. QUESTION: Will students in these classes miss the regular curriculum?

ANSWER: No. The subject areas covered are the same as the regular curriculum. In many cases the same textbooks are used. Since the material in the basic text can be learned more rapidly, students are given an opportunity to go into the material more deeply by using supplementary materials. Many teachers of gifted students do not use the basal texts, however, since they may be too easy.

11. QUESTION: How does the school know if the special class plan is a good technique for talented students?

ANSWER: A school needs a well-planned program of evaluation. Programs have been constantly improving each year. The consultants for the Section for the Education of Gifted and Talented Students are always ready to assist local school units with their program development and evaluations. Many schools are moving towards more flexibility in staff use in order to serve more eligible students.

12. QUESTION: Won't recognizing these students as the brightest in the school cause them to become snobbish?

ANSWER: Seldom does this become a problem. Studies have shown that students are more likely to feel superior if left in a regular classroom where they always know the answers to questions and always make the highest grades. Often students who have felt superior to their classmates have had a favorable change of attitude when placed in classes with students who were as intelligent as they or have equal talents. In these classes they meet challenge.

13. QUESTION: I often hear that students are already being given too much work. Aren't these classes likely to overwork students and cause emotional problems?

ANSWER: This has not been a problem. Since these students can work faster and their stamina is greater, they usually have to work no harder in these classes than the average students do in the regular classroom.

14. QUESTION: Will the child have more homework?

ANSWER: The answer to this question depends upon the individual teacher. When several teachers and students around the state were asked this question, most stated that the homework was about the same as that in the average classroom. Most agreed that there were fewer daily homework assignments but more extended assignments such as essays and research projects Very few students indicated that they were given too much homework

15. QUESTION: Can a child be removed from the class if he, the parents or the teachers think that he is not responding favorably in the class?

ANSWER: Yes. Participation in the class is voluntary. This action should be taken only after consultation with the parents and student, however.

16. QUESTION: Can a child be placed in one of these classes during the year?

ANSWER: Yes, if he meets the criteria, has been recommended for the class, and there is space for him.

17. QUESTION: What kind of teacher is used to instruct these gifted students?

ANSWER: Naturally, the local administration chooses staff. Personnel are chosen with care. The teacher should be one who is bright, creative, innovative, flexible and not afraid to experiment with new theories and ideas. She should be a warm individual who understands gifted children This teacher requires the talent to make long range plans with and not for the children. In other words, the teacher of the gifted will be a master teacher, one who is multi-faceted. We encourage our teachers to use the Inquiry Method as an excellent technique to enable bright youngsters to work on their own and in small groups

18. QUESTION: How large is the program?

ANSWER: In 1971-72 there were 237 special State allotments for Exceptional Children serving over 11,000 students in all parts of North Carolina In addition almost 500 other teachers were serving many thousands of children Since regular teachers working with bright students are not reported to us, we do not actually know how many children receive special programs. We do know that the majority of our gifted and talented students do not receive special help other than that in the regular class

19. QUESTION: Do other states have special provisions for the exceptionally talented?

ANSWER: When North Carolina began its program in 1961 it was the second state in the United States to have a state-wide program. At the present time many other states are making special provision for exceptionally talented students. Only ten states have a state office and staff for the gifted. North Carolina's program is judged to be one of the top three or four in the United States.

20. QUESTION: Is the program financed by one of the new Federal Aid-to-Education Programs?

ANSWER: No. The program is fully financed from state and local funds.

21. QUESTION: Is the present program adequate in size to meet the needs of all exceptionally talented students in the state?

ANSWER: Not at the present time. The size of the program is determined by the amount of money appropriated for the exceptional allotments by the Legislature. If we assume that 9 to 10 percent of our 1,100,000 pupils could meet the requirements set in the criteria, only one-fourth of the eligible children have been reported as being in the program. The great need for expansion is certainly evident. We are optimistic that the program will grow and improve as more interest is generated on the part of parents, teachers and administrators and more aid becomes available.

22. QUESTION: Are funds in addition to the exceptional State allotments provided for this program for supplementary materials?

ANSWER: No funds have ever been directly let from this office but local LEA's may request NDEA funds.

23. QUESTION: Is there a "correct" number of students to be enrolled for a class?

ANSWER: No. This, again, is a local administrative decision. However, the Section for the Gifted and Talented feel strongly that there is an optimum ratio within one class. Class size should be approximately 15 as a minimum with approximately 24 as a maximum with 18 to 20 as an ideal number. Fewer children do not give the necessary challenge and diversity; more children prohibit enough individualized instruction and attention.

24. QUESTION: How could a program for the gifted be structured? Is there a "correct" plan to use?

ANSWER: There is no "correct" plan or structure to use. Staff utilization is also determined by the local administrative officials. However, we have briefly listed some ways that these classes have been organized.

Self-Contained Classes: Many of the elementary classes in the program are arranged like this proven old stand-by. One teacher has the identified bright youngsters for the whole day. As more departmentalization, team teaching and multi-grade, multi-age grouping appear, fewer arrangements like this will be seen.

Centers of Interest: An imaginative, energetic teacher in a self-contained class can develop centers of interest around the room where children can "do their own thing" individually or in groups of two or three. This room will be child directed and not teacher dominated.

Team Teaching: An allotment might be divided between two or more teachers. For instance, these teachers might have adjoining rooms with the same grade level or two or three grade levels; they might share a large area together working in such subjects as English, language arts, social studies or humanities. They could plan together, have the classes combine and/or separate for projects, skills instruction, reports, field trips, speakers, etc.

Combination Grade: Frequently, principals shy away from this arrangement unless forced into it by pupil population. In a school with only a few eligible children, this can be a perfect plan. Gifted children learn more rapidly and work well independently and in small groups so lend themselves to opportunities in this learning situation. The teacher is wise not to rely on the textbooks but should take opportunity to use a variety of supplementary materials to teach these children.

Multi-age, Multi-grade, Continuous Progress Program: This innovative concept utilizes an ungraded approach in which the curriculum is individualized and a child may progress at his own rate of speed. All the children are not doing the same things. Many centers of interest or resource centers are arranged around the room where the child can work on his own or with a few others.

Itinerant Teacher (Daily): One allotment is used as a teacher shared by two or more schools, depending on the distance to be traveled. This teacher works with the GT children every day in each school in one or two subjects.

Itinerant Teacher (Not Meeting Class Every Day): This teacher works in one area (science for example) and has four or five schools on the fifth and sixth grade levels so is unable to meet each group every day. She will see the class two or three times per week. Another modification of this idea would be in grades four, five, and six for language arts enrichment. Each grade has a day by itself. For example, the fourth grade has Monday and Thursday the first week, Tuesday and Friday the next, and Wednesday the third week. The entire three grade cycle will rotate through her room five days every three weeks. The eligible children in each grade are divided into two workable groups. The teacher sees both groups during the morning. In the afternoon single children or several can come to her for additional work on their day.

Itinerant Resource Teacher: This is the most flexible arrangement of all and is for enrichment and in-depth work. This is an area that exhibits a great deal of promise for the future. Several administrative units are using it at present. This use of the allotment enables one teacher to work with more gifted and talented children than many of the other arrangements. Many units do not have enough eligible children in a given grade or school to warrant the use of an allotment in some other way. It also enables bright youngsters to be left in heterogeneous classes if this is the philosophy of the administration. A manual THE ITINERANT RESOURCE TEACHER has been prepared and published by the State explaining this concept. A great deal of care will need to be exercised to select just the right teacher for this. In turn, work done by this teacher and her children will have a carry-over into the regular classes in that she will use innovative techniques.

Block Serving One Grade Level: A block of math-science and another of language arts-social studies on one grade level using two teachers would be an example. Another variation is to have one teacher (or two) who teaches two blocks of the same grade, one in the morning and the other in the afternoon. This would double the number of gifted children in the program.

Block Serving Two Grade Levels: A block of language arts-social studies or math-science at the seventh grade level could take half the day. The same person would teach an eighth grade block the rest of the day.

Block Serving Four Grade Levels: One allotment can be used in a morning Humanities block of time for a combination grade of ninth and tenth graders and an afternoon block for the combination eleventh and twelfth grade. This program requires a continuum of time over the years and a great deal of pre-planning on the part of the instructor.

One Subject Area with One Teacher in High School: One teacher can be assigned to teach all levels of English in a nine through twelve high school, one class of each. An advantage in this utilization of staff is that the teacher knows exactly what the students have had and where they need additional work. Drawbacks are the amount of preparation required (four different preparations) plus the students would not have the advantage of other teaching techniques and areas of emphasis that a variety of teachers would bring to the class.

Divided Allotment: Rather than have one teacher do as the above method suggested, one allotment may be divided between two teachers, each taking two grade levels, or among four teachers, each taking one grade level in addition to their other regular classes.

One Teacher, One Subject, Four-Five Classes: In a very large high school with many gifted classes in one subject, one teacher might have four or five classes in a day with only one preparation such as biology or American history.

Advanced Placement: High schools may want to move into Advanced Placement classes in social studies, math, English, foreign languages, art, music or science. In late spring the students who have followed a course of study sent by the College Entrance Examination Board, will take a test prepared and corrected by CEEB. A score of three to five will enable the student to receive advanced placement in most colleges in the United States. At some (he will need to check individually with the college of his choice) in addition he will receive credit for the courses he missed. Placement exams taken at the college itself do not give credit for the courses skipped. With the cost of college going up, this is a good selling point in talking with parents. Unless the library is well equipped and the various departments have a large and varied group of supplementary books and tapes, additional funds would be necessary to follow the CEEB's course of study.

25. QUESTION: What is Advanced Placement? What are Advanced Placement classes?

ANSWER: Advanced Placement operates with the idea that high school students can complete college-level courses while still in high school. The program

has been instituted by the College Entrance Examination Board. Courses are offered in American history, biology, chemistry, English, European history, French, German, Latin, art history, studio art, music, mathematics, physics and Spanish. The course descriptions and exams are prepared by CEEB but the course itself is taught by regular high school teachers in the local school. The exams are graded by a committee appointed by CEEB. Most colleges accept satisfactory exam scores in lieu of freshman college courses. For additional information contact Walter R. Jacobs, Jr., Southern Regional Office, CEEB, Suite 200, 17 Executive Park Drive, N.E., Atlanta, Georgia 30329. One advantage of this program is that a whole class or an individual student may participate.

26. QUESTION: What is done to prepare teachers for these exceptional classes?

ANSWER: For the past three years a teacher training institute has been held at the Governor's School to train secondary teachers. For the past two years the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation funded the project. During the third year the State Department of Public Instruction with a grant from College Entrance Examination Board supplied the money. In 1972 a Middle Grades Career Exploration Institute for Teachers of Children with Exceptional Ability was held funded by Federal Occupational Education monies. Out of each institute has come a series of state-wide one-day workshops to upgrade competencies of hundreds of other teachers.

27. QUESTION: What is the Governor's School?

ANSWER: This concept originated in the office of Governor Terry Sanford Beginning with the first year in 1963, the school operated for three years using private foundation funds. In 1966, the eight-week summer school was taken over by the State Department of Public Instruction. Four hundred rising juniors and seniors are selected to attend the school held on the campus of Salem College in Winston-Salem.

28. QUESTION: How are the students selected?

ANSWER: These bright youngsters are chosen from all over the State in the academic areas of English, French, social studies, natural science and math and in the performing arts of the dance, drama, choral and instrumental music, and art. Choice is made by a pre-determined rating scale based on academic achievement, intelligence and talent. A set number of students will be chosen for each classification For example, only 50 students were selected from more than 200 applications in English alone in 1971. Each candidate is submitted by his or her superintendent upon his principal's recommendation. Space on campus is limited and classes are kept small, so only 400 out of the more than 1200 applications received, all of whom are very qualified, can be selected. Since the school is a residential one, a balance must be maintained by sex, also. Unfortunately, all of these worthy youngsters cannot attend. However, studies show that culturally different and deprived students do not necessarily achieve to their potential on intelligence tests. Therefore students with this background possessing exceptional abilities or talents are given consideration. Supporting statements from teachers or administrators are helpful in selection of these students. Students are selected from all ethnic and economic backgrounds.

29. QUESTION: Are credits given for work covered at the Governor's School? Will work taken here allow the participant to skip work in his regular school?

ANSWER: No, to both questions. The purpose of the school is to supplement not supplant the regular curriculum. Grades are not given nor is credit received. The program is exploratory in nature and helps the student to develop his ability to think more deeply.